



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Phone: (703) 351-7676

1 February 1980

STAT

Mr. W. Davis Merritt, Jr.
Editor
Wichita Eagle
Box 820
Wichita, Kansas 67201

Dear Mr. Merritt:

I have just read your editorial of 14 January, "Keeping the CIA Accountable," which asserts that "Sloppy accountability has long been a major criticism of the CIA..."

In January 1978, President Carter signed Executive Order 12036, "United States Intelligence Activities," which spelled out in great detail what the CIA can and cannot do. Nearly three years ago the President created the Intelligence Oversight Board whose only mission is to look over and into the activities of this country's intelligence apparatus.

Both Houses of Congress have created committees for precisely the same purpose--the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (19 May 1976) and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (24 July 1977). Both committees are currently at work on charter legislation that will further define and improve the legal framework within which intelligence activities are conducted. We conceal nothing from these oversight committees and cooperate with them fully.

Finally, the CIA is subject to the same rigorous budget process as other government organizations. Its budget is carefully scrutinized by the Office of Management and Budget and by the President before it is forwarded to Congress for additional in-depth inspection by four committees of Congress. The programs behind the budget are challenged and justified at every turn, as they should be.

-2-

Your readers deserve to know that CIA's accountability need not be of major concern to them, nor should they therefore be concerned about "unleashing the potentially abusive powers" of CIA as you have suggested.

My office can assist you with details on important issues such as this. Please don't hesitate to call.

Sincerely,



Deputy Director
Office of Public Affairs

STAT

STAT

WICHITA EAGLE
14 January 1980

Keeping the CIA Accountable

Just two years after asking for curbs on covert operations by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Carter administration is seeking to have those restrictions relaxed. The crisis in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan notwithstanding, extreme caution should be exercised before unleashing the potentially abusive powers of any intelligence body.

Revelations in recent years have brought a great deal of unfavorable attention to the CIA. Agents from within agency ranks have exposed programs designed to alter human behavior through drugs, poisons, brain surgery and electric shock techniques. There have been documented cases of domestic surveillance, spying, bugging, wiretapping, breaking and entering, and gathering of data on private citizens.

Information also has come to light on CIA involvement in massive paramilitary operations, assassination plots involving various foreign leaders, and the misuse of intelligence personnel in partisan political activities. CIA ownership of more than 50 foreign newspapers, news services, radio stations, periodicals and other communication entities has been alleged.

To set the wheels in motion for possible further abuses, without strong congressional oversight, would be a mistake. Another factor is that with all the unchecked power at the

disposal of the CIA, there still has been a consistent failure to obtain accurate security information. Wrong evaluations of political situations in Vietnam, Laos, Cuba and Iran are a few examples.

Patrick McGarvey, a 14-year veteran of the CIA, calls the operation of the agency an "insufferable, bureaucratic morass with little or no direction, sorely needing basic change." Even the 1978 reshuffling by Mr. Carter and the installation of Adm. Stansfield Turner as CIA director has done little to change the basic tenor of the vast agency devoted to foreign intelligence.

Serious concerns also have been raised because of recent proposals both by the CIA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation for weakening of the Freedom of Information Act as it relates to obtaining data about the operations of these two investigative bodies. Sloppy accountability has long been a major criticism of the CIA, which the watering down of public access only would enhance.

The security of the nation must be preserved, and the existence of counterintelligence agencies is necessary. But proper channeling, as well as oversight, are essential. We are not convinced the latest administration proposal ensures either.